

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 03795 061035Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3795

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SF
SUBJECT: DONALD WOODS CRITICIZED BY SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS
AND LIBERALS

1. ON JULY 1, THE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (WASA) AT ITS ANNUAL CONGRESS, PASSED A RESOLUTION CON-DEMNING DONALD WOODS AS "IRRELEVANT" TO THE BLACK STRUGGLE AND TO BLACK JOURNALISM. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, WASA CONDEMNED WOODS AS AN OPPORTUNIST OF "THE MOST UNSCRUPULOUS KIND" AND AS A "HYPOCRITE", WHO, AS EDITOR OF THE DAILY DISPATCH DID NOTHING TO IMPROVE THE POSITION OF BLACK JOURNALISTS ON HIS PAPER. "WE EXPRESS OUR DISGUST," THE RESOLUTION SAID, "AT THE SHAMELESS MANNER IN WHICH HE IS EXPLOITING THE NAME OF THE HERO OF THE PEOPLE, STEVE BIKO."

2. WASA IS THE BLACK COUNTERPART OF THE PREDOMINANTLY WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF JOURNALISTS (SASJ) AND REPRESENTS 150 OF THE APPROXIMATELY 200 BLACK JOURNALISTS
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PAGE 02 PRETOR 03795 061035Z

IN THE COUNTRY. WASA, WHICH RECENTLY HAD ITS MEETING BANNED FROM EAST LONDON, ALSO PASSED RESOLUTIONS: AGAINST JOINING THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF JOURNALISTS IF THE WHITE SASJ WAS GIVEN MEMBERSHIP; CON-DEMNING THE SASJ ITSELF AND INDIVIDUAL NEWSPAPERS FOR EXPLOITING BLACKS; AND ATTACKING THE UK FOR ALLOWING WOODS ASYLUM BUT REFUSING A BLACK JOURNALIST, WISEMAN

KHUZWAYO.

3. THIS IS THE FIRST PUBLIC BLAST AT DONALD WOODS FROM A "MILITANT" BLACK ORGANIZATION, ALTHOUGH CHIEF BUTHELEZI HIT BACK FOLLOWING WOODS' CRITICISM OF HIM. IRONICALLY, WOODS HAS BECOME THE "MAN THEY LOVE TO HATE" IN ALMOST ALL QUARTERS HERE. TAKEN AT FIRST BY WHITE LIBERALS AND SOME BLACK ACTIVISTS AS A HERO OF SORTS, WOODS HAS SINCE FACED A REASSESSMENT. THE MILITANT AND LIBERAL SIDE HAS BEGUN TO FEEL THAT WOODS IS PLAYING TOO MUCH TO HIS AUDIENCE AND THEREBY MISREPRESENTING HIS ROLE. THE FACT THAT WOODS IS PERCEIVED HERE TO BE PROFITING FROM HIS ANTI-SAG ACTIVITIES HAS ALSO TURNED OFF MANY WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN SYMPATHETIC. WHITE ENGLISH-SPEAKING LIBERAL CONTACTS OF THE EMBASSY HAVE MOSTLY SEEMED DIS-APPOINTED BECAUSE OF HIS MERCENARY IMAGE NOW BEING PROJECTED BY "ONE OF THEIR OWN". SINCE THE WASA ACCUSATION, THE RAND DAILY MAIL EDITORIALY AND SOME INDIVIDUALS PRIVATELY HAVE REACTED CRITICALLY, BUT NOT SO MUCH IN DEFENSE OF WOODS AS AGAINST THEIR PERCEPTION OF REVERSE RACISM IN WASA'S STATEMENT. BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ACTIVISTS, INCLUDING MEMBERS OF BIKO'S FAMILY AND CLOSE ASSOCIATES TELL US THEY ARE ANGERED BECAUSE THEY FEEL WOODS HAS MISREPRESENTED HIMSELF. THEY CLAIM THERE NEVER WAS A CLOSE IDEOLOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN WOODS AND BIKO, BUT RATHER THEY SAW EACH OTHER AS FRIENDLY RIVALS WITH WOODS

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PAGE 03 PRETOR 03795 061035Z

CRITICIZING BIKO'S BLACK POWER STAND AS "REVERSE RACISM" AND BIKO CRITICIZING WOODS' LIBERAL STAND BUT "NON-COMMITMENT" TO THE STRUGGLE. SINCE HIS DEPARTURE, WHICH MANY FEEL WAS FALSELY DRAMATIZED, WOODS, THEY SAY, HAS BECOME "HOLIER THAN THE POPE" AND PRESENTS HIMSELF AS A SPOKESMAN FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACKS.

4. COMMENT: THIS REACTION TO WOODS IN PART REFLECTS A TENDENCY AMONG SOUTH AFRICANS TO CONDEMN THOSE WHO TRY TO ASSERT LEADERSHIP OR DIRECTION FROM THE OUTSIDE. THIS IS APPARENT IN THE SAG'S OWN CAMPAIGN AGAINST PERCEIVED WESTERN "INTERFERENCE" IN ITS INTERNAL AFFAIRS BUT ALSO PREVALENT IN THE REACTIONS OF MILITANTS AND SOME LIBERALS TO EXILED OR ALIEN OBSERVERS PRETENDING TO SPEAK FOR THE BLACKS OF SOUTH AFRICA. EVEN EXILED ANC AND PAC LEADERS LIKE OLIVER TAMPO HAVE COME IN FOR THIS KIND OF CRITICISM. IT SEEMS BASED ON THE FEELING THAT SOLUTIONS ARE BEST FOSTERED INTERNALLY, A POINT THAT BIKO AND SOBUKWE USED TO MAKE. THE FACT THAT A WHITE LATE-BLOSSOMING LIBERAL HAS BECOME FOR THE MOMENT THE MOST PROMINENT ANTI-SAG FOE IN THE WEST ALSO RANKLES WITH BLACK MILITANTS. EDMONDSON

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